

NSW Government and IBM Launch P-TECH Program at Three NSW Central Coast Schools to Address Digital Skills Shortage

Local high school students gain access to P-TECH program which aims to prepare students for technology-related careers

Sydney, Australia, 10 November 2020: NSW Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, the Hon Geoff Lee MP, have joined IBM representatives to announce the launch of the Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) program at three schools on the NSW Central Coast in 2021.

Launching at Henry Kendall High School, Kariong Mountains High School and Tumbi Umbi campus of Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, the P-TECH program aims to prepare students for technology-related careers through structured workplace experiences and industry skills development with industry partners. These include industry mentoring, worksite visits, paid internships and first-in-line for job consideration with industry partners upon completion of the P-TECH program.

Australia and many other countries are experiencing a shortage of ICT and STEM skills as a result of industries being reshaped by rapid technology developments in Artificial intelligence (AI), automation, data science, cloud computing and cybersecurity. According to Australia's Digital Pulse 2019 – the Australian Computing Society's latest annual investigation into the state of our IT sector – 100,000 more tech workers are still needed in Australia by 2024.

Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, Geoff Lee, welcomed the P-TECH program as an innovative collaboration between industry and schools.

"P-TECH strengthens the connection between student learning and the skills that employers need. It improves young people's prospects of employment," Mr Lee said.

"We recognise the importance of industry-school partnership models. Since late 2018, another successful initiative, the Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program, has created over 44,000 opportunities for students across NSW to engage with over 900 employers and industry partners."

IBM Australia & New Zealand Managing Director, Katrina Troughton, said "We are excited to partner with the NSW Government, local schools, businesses and education institutions to address current youth unemployment and create an industry talent pipeline with the digital skills that are in high and growing demand in industry."

"Schools, education organisations and industry partners are working together as part of the P-TECH model, enabling students to earn relevant post-secondary qualifications that connect to competitive entry-level careers, as well as develop the academic, technical and professional skills -- such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication -- required to compete in the 21st century economy."

To introduce them to the program, more than 105 students in years 9 and 10, recently took part in P-TECH immersion activities which included virtual guest speakers from a range of industries, mentoring sessions, and online workshops focused on professional skills such as communication, collaboration and leadership. A number of students also took part in regular work experience with local company Crossmuller.

IBM has partnered with stakeholders including the University of Newcastle, Central Coast Industry Connect, Food Futures Company, North Construction & Building, Crossmuller and Central Coast Council to support students at Henry Kendall High School (Gosford), Kariong Mountains High School (Kariong Mountains) and Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College (Tumbi Umbi campus). It is expected that face to face mentoring and industry site visits will commence next year, when COVID safe.

The P-TECH program is currently available in 16 schools in Australia with more than 3000 students to date experiencing the program. In 2011, IBM co-founded the P-TECH school model in collaboration with public education partners in response to technology skills gap that has continued to grow. IBM continues to support this public education innovation model which has been adopted by public education authorities in 28 countries and regions, with more than 241 open schools and 600 company partners.

P-TECH is a collaboration with industry and public education, working closely with individual schools to meet local needs and requirements and ensure students develop the skills required for 21st century jobs.